

Beginning of

Studies in Jewish home life as a background for
courses in the life and teachings of Jesus


This title was preceded by

The life-philosophy of Lawrence Pearsall Jacks
A critical appraisal of three modern Christian
movements from the standpoint of their possible
contribution to the work of liberal Christian education

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STUDIES IN JEWISH HOME LIFE AS A BACKGROUND FOR
COURSES IN THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS

by

Lois Hamilton Gregg

B. A. University of California at Los Angeles, 1932

THESIS

Submitted in the Department of Religious Education in
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of Master of Arts in the Pacific School of Religion.

STUDIES IN JEWISH HOME LIFE AS A BACKGROUND FOR COURSES IN THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS

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FOREWORD

Although this paper has been prepared for the Department of Religious Education, I feel that I should acknowledge my indebtedness to the New Testament Department, which provided me with the necessary background material. I wish especially to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance given me by Dr. C.C. McGown, Dean and Professor of New Testament Literature and Interpretation of the Pacific School of Religion. In 1920-21 Dean McGown spent the year in Palestine as fellow of the American School of Oriental Research at Jerusalem and acted as Director of the Jerusalem School for the years 1929-31. During the time spent there, he collected materials to illustrate Jewish life and worship in New Testament times. The photographs included in this paper were all taken by him and are used with his permission.

Lois H. Gregg

Berkeley, California
March 27, 1935



"For, lo, the winter is past;
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land;
The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom;
They give forth their fragrance."

- Song of Solomon 2:11-13

THE SETTING

In order to understand more fully the study of the Jewish home, life in the home, and the home and the community, it will be necessary to have a picture in mind of where these homes were and something of their immediate surroundings. In the telling of any story, or the producing of any play, there must be a setting; and so it is with the subject at hand. A knowledge of the setting of the study will add a great deal to the picture of Jewish home life.

Dr. Ellsworth Huntington, one of the men who has made a particular study of Palestine, the home of the Jews, writes:

"The correct interpretation of history demands first a knowledge of man's mental, moral, and spiritual qualities, that is, of the psychological character of human nature. Then it demands an understanding of his surroundings, or of the mould in which generation after generation has been cast. The chief of all moulding forces is geographic environment, the form of the land where a man lives and obtains sustenance, the nature of the forests, swamps, or mountains to which he flees for refuge, and the character of the climate which determines his mode of life and fills him with lassitude or energy...In Palestine, as perhaps nowhere else, the power of nature in moulding human actions and thoughts is plainly visible. There, too, in strangest contrast, faith and the power of ideals have triumphed more gloriously than in any other land."¹

It will be possible only to touch upon this important and interesting phase of the study of Jewish life, as particular emphasis will be placed on the home and life within the home and the community.

1. Palestine and Its Transformation, p. 4.

Palestine is of particular interest because it was the home of Jesus and of the Jewish race. If something is known of the land, where it was, how large it was, something of the climate, how the hills and valleys looked, if there were any flowers on the hills, and many other interesting things, a background is formed for a study of the home life of the Jews. Also, with an understanding of these important factors, one is much more able to understand Jesus and his teachings.

In New Testament times, Palestine was divided into four parts. In the south was Judea, on the west of the Jordan, with Jerusalem as its capital. This was the center of everything religious, the most sacred place on the earth. In the center of Palestine was Samaria, a richer country than Judea. The Jews and the Samaritans did not mix and were not on friendly terms. North of Samaria was Galilee, where Nazareth nestled in one of the valleys north of the plain of Esdraelon. Five miles from Nazareth was the city of Sepphoris, which from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D. was the residence of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea. To the east of Nazareth, within a little over two hours walk, towered Mount Tabor. On the east of the Jordan lay Peraea which extended southward to the valley of the Arnon.

One of the most remarkable facts relative to the country of Palestine is its smallness as compared with its importance. In other countries of the world, one may travel eighty or more miles and feel that nothing has been seen, but in Palestine this is not the case. By travelling this same distance in Palestine, one would be surprised to learn that the most essential features of the country have been within his gaze, and that much of the country has been seen. It is not only the smallness of the country but the variety of scenery found there

that is most amazing. Nowhere in the world, with perhaps the exception of parts of California, can be found such a variety in so small a space. (See Figs: 2-9)

Both the physical form of the land and the climate contribute to this variety in Palestine. In the Tertiary Era, the last great geological age, there was a tremendous volcanic action in Syria, Palestine, and far to the south of them. As a result of strains, a great crack was made in the earth's crust from the peninsula of Sinai on the south to the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea five hundred miles away to the north, a great arching up of the earth took place, steep toward the west, flat on the top and of gentle slope toward the east. At the north the movement amounted to six or eight thousand feet. In the center it was greater, so that Lebanon, and Hermon rise² nine or ten thousand feet above the Mediterranean. The Jordan valley is a great trench in the surface of the earth caused by this crack. The Sea of Galilee is 681 feet below sea level and the Dead Sea is almost 1,300 feet below sea level.

Concerning this variety in the physical form of the land and the climate, Dr. C.C. McGown writes:

"What Palestine offered the Hebrews was an inimitable combination of mountain and plain. The rough forbidding, and unproductive mountains in a healthful, variable climate produced a race blessed with bodily and mental vigor, a love for manual labor, and boundless adaptability. Tho they protected, they did not fully isolate, nor did hard labor dull the minds of all. In the fertile plains below, the hardy mountaineers made contacts with the whole of the ancient world.

2. Huntington, Ellsworth, Palestine and Its Transformation, p. 23.

They were at once isolated and centrally situated. Mentally and religiously they belonged both to the desert and to the sown. They knew both mountain and plain, both sea and land. They were acquainted with the wild, free life of the uncultivated wilderness, the joyful harvests and the gay vintages as well as the vexing hardships and the fatal failures of agriculture, the grinding toil of industry, the rich rewards and the bitter losses of commerce. In the indirect effects of a remarkable combination of upland and lowland, of sterility and fruitfulness, of remoteness and worldwide intercourse, we find the origin of the unique social ideals of the Hebrews.³"

Palestine is a sub-tropical country and lies in the same latitude as southern California and compares with it in climate. The first heavy rains come in November and December and the last in March or April. The fertile land of Palestine is limited to the western slope and to the summit of the western highland, and to the corresponding portions of the eastern highland. All the rest is steppe. Palestine has always been in danger from hordes from the desert who ravaged the fertile country in time of drought and famine. Palestine was, and is, not free from drought and famine. When the rains fail to come in the fall, the planted grain does not grow sufficiently before the cold weather comes; and in the spring if the rains stop before the grain gains sufficient growth, there is suffering. Because of their dependence upon the rains, the people of Palestine have had to live in a state of insecurity, never knowing when planting their grain whether the crops would be harvested.

3. McCown, C.C. Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 73.

In order to better visualize the country, it will be of value to learn what visitors and scholars have said about Palestine. These word pictures and personal impressions of those who have actually been in Palestine will lead to a better understanding and appreciation of it.

George A. Barton writes his impression of Palestine:

"During the long dry summer, when never a drop of rain falls, nor a cloud flecks the sky, the hills become mere dusty surfaces which look like ash-heaps. Here and there a vineyard or an olive orchard relieves the barrenness, but otherwise it seems as though those dead hills could never sustain a living thing. When the rain comes, however, grass springs up. The peasants sow their wheat, oats, barley, and sesame, and these, too, soon become green. At the end of January wild flowers begin to bloom, and by April the whole land is a continuous flower garden of unimagined beauty. There are anemones, white and all shades of purple, red, and pink. Some of them are as large as saucers. Bachelors' buttons of every hue grow in profusion, as do red, pink, and blue poppies, and countless flowers of which I do not know the names. Every landscape is a mass of color. I never saw anywhere else such a profusion of flowers."⁴

Another vivid description is given by Ernest W. G. Masterman:

"Only those who have lived through the cold, wet, lifeless winter in Galilee can fully realize the unthinkable change which comes in the spring. First come the crocuses on the level fields and the cyclamen in the rocky crevices, each putting forth its early flowers from the bulbs of stored-up nourishment: then the anemones - scarlet, purple,

4. Barton, George A., Jesus of Nazareth, p. 6.

white - the gladioli, the purple irises, the pink and yellow flaxes, the crumpled-leaved cistus, and the ubiquitous primrose....A little later in the spring, miles of hillside and valley are waving with grain, and the great plain in particular is green almost from end to end. The fig trees now shoot forth their delicate green leaves and tiny figs; the pomegranates deck out their soberer green with brilliant scarlet blossoms: the foliage of the grapes appears - all signs that the winter is past and the summer is near at hand. The hilltops are covered by the flocks of sheep and goats, while all the valleys re-echo to the shepherds' pipes."⁵

Dr. C. C. McCown writes:

"There are strange and picturesque scenes innumerable; there are prospects of magnificent desolation. There are few quiet landscapes where the eye delights to dwell and the soul is invited to rest and repose. In Palestine proper there are no magnificent rivers, no wide-sweeping plains, but everywhere stony heaths and desolate moors, rough rocks and rugged gorges, interspersed with occasional orchards, meadows, and fields. Forests are now entirely wanting in western Palestine. During the greater part of the year the country is a drab combination of gray and brown. Only in late winter and early spring is there an outburst of flowers and green foliage that charms the Easter tourist into ecstasies."⁶

George Adam Smith, in describing the scenery of Palestine, says that to some travellers it has been very disappointing and commonplace - and he explains that the land has been stripped and starved since the time it

5. Studies in Galilee, p. 137.

6. Genesis of the Social Gospel, p. 40.

was written about in the Old and New Testaments. Still, he says:

"Even in the barest provinces you get many a little picture that lives with you - a chocolate-coloured bank with red poppies against the green of the prickly-pear hedge above it, and a yellow lizard darting across: a river-bed of pink oleanders flush with the plain; a gorge in Judaea, where you look up between limestone walls picked out with tufts of grass and black-and-tan goats cropping at them, the blue sky over all, and, on the edge of the only shadow, a well, a trough, and a solitary herdsman.

"There is the view from the Mount of Olives, down twenty miles of hill-tops to the deep blue waters, and beyond it the Moab range, misty, silent, and weird... And, above all, there is the view from Engedi under the full moon, when the sea is bridged with gold, and the eastern mountains are black with a border of Opal.

"But, whether there be beauty or not, there is on all the heights that sense of space and distance which comes from Palestine's high position between the great desert and the great sea."⁷

It has been possible only to give a general impression of the country of Palestine with just a few words about the topography of the land, the climate, descriptions of scenery, and its place in the scheme of things in New Testament times. It is fitting to close this part of the study of Jewish life by a contribution made by one who knows Palestine because he has been there, has travelled all over the country, has eaten with the different types of people, has been entertained over night in the most simple as well as the finest of the homes, and has made it his life work to interpret the New Testament to students of

religion and to anyone who is willing to learn.

In spite of disadvantages in the climate and geographical factors in Palestine, the situation was such as to:

"prepare the Hebrews for an intelligent and original contribution to international civilization, not in the fields of economics and politics, nor in imaginative literature nor in art, not in science nor in speculative philosophy, but in practical morality and religion. Directly, but indirectly far more, the unique geographical conditions of Palestine played a large part in the development of Hebrew life and thought. Much must be conceded to the geographical interpretation of history.

"Under ancient conditions of travel and intercourse the variety of climate and contour within the country gave to its different sections their own idiosyncrasies of outlook and, therefore, caused each to play its own peculiar part in the drama of history: Judea the self-sufficient and sometimes fanatical Puritan, Samaria the liberal-minded, open-hearted spendthrift, Galilee the enterprising, forward-looking pioneer. The Israelites' conception of God and his providence was the product partly of the difficulties with which they wrestled on a rough and rocky soil under a capricious climate, and partly of the tragic drama of world history in which their location forced them to be subordinate and unwilling actors. Their pattern ideas in social matters, tho transformed in passing thru their minds, were in good part inherited from older nations with whom their geographical location forced them to live as allies or subjects. Their democracy was due partly to their close proximity to the Arabian steppe, from which they had come and from which they received repeated infusions of nomadic blood and ideals, and partly to the fact that, in their geographical situation, overflowing luxury and highly complex social and economic organization were impossible. Proximity to the desert kept the blood of frugal, hardy, liberty-loving nomadism ever fresh in the veins of the Hebrews. Nearness to lands where wealth, luxury, and international intercourse were common prepared them for participation in world affairs and for sharing with the world the products of their vigorous thinking. The social ideals of their great prophets were in good part at least the product of the long conflict forced upon them by their exceptional location between the desert and the sown and on the highways of international commerce. And finally their unique contribution as missionaries of their ideals to all the world was due again to the toughness and adaptability bred in them by their environment and to the central location in which their land was placed." 8

8. McCown, C.C. The Genesis of the Social Gospel, pp. 73-74



Fig. 2. Rocky Cape Just North of Gennesaret.



Fig. 3. Baal - Hazor - A Great Flat Mountain Top.



Fig. 4. Flowers in the springtime. Near Kursi,
(Gergesa)

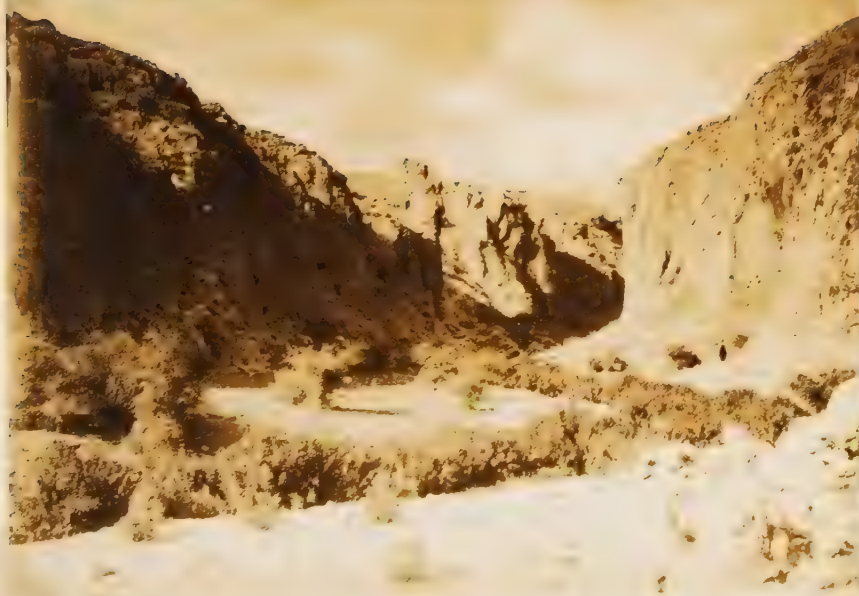


Fig. 5. Wâdī el-ʿAmûd. A little wâdī, - an
illustration of the kind of gullies that
work in the limestone hills near the
Plain of Gennesaret.



Fig. 6. Sea of Galilee, eastern shore.
Wâdī Semakh.



Fig. 7. Wâdī el-ʿAmûd, Galilee



Fig. 8. Mound at Beth-Shean. The University of Pennsylvania have been excavating here.



Fig. 9. Scene on Carmel.

THE HOME

When the word "home" is seen or heard, the thought of "a place to live" is immediately aroused. The word home is associated with family relationships, childhood, and with the many opportunities and advantages which come from this important institution. So little is known about the home in which Jesus lived, that it is an important task to try to discover what kind of a home Jesus might have had, what activities went on in the home at that time, and what effect the home had upon the lives of the people.

It is difficult to picture a Jewish home with its surroundings, as it was such a different kind of home from the ones seen today in this country. However, if one could visit Palestine and see how the people live today, it would not be quite so difficult to picture a home in which Jesus might have lived. Some of the houses in Palestine today are similar to the ones common in New Testament times.

Just as there are different types of houses in all parts of the world today, there were different kinds in Palestine among the Jews. The poorer class of people could not have the same kind of houses as the more wealthy class. Also, the people who lived a Nomadic life had different homes from those living in the villages. Jesus was one of the poorer people and probably lived in a simple house. This type of home will be stressed in this study of Jewish home life, but the well-to-do people will also be considered in order to have a complete picture.

The Nomads, or Bedouins, were the most simple in their home-making. These people lived either in caves or in tents, and roamed over wide areas, making their homes wherever they willed. These people lived a carefree life and when it became necessary to move their flocks, a new home was found. Another group of these people lived in the villages a part of the year and would leave some of their belongings in their village home while out in the tents.

The Fellahin, as contrasted with the Bedouins, were tillers of the soil and dwelt in more permanent abodes than the carefree Bedouin shepherds.

A simple home usually had only one room. This one room was about eight by ten yards square.¹ The houses of the more prosperous people had more than one room or compartment and were made out of better materials than the houses of the poor. The houses of the rich and poor were not separated, as a usual thing, and beside a so-called palace, there would be a very humble, one room dwelling.

In the lowlands of Palestine, many of the houses were made of mud with thatch and straw, but in the hills where stone was plentiful, even the poorest people could use rough hewn stone to build their homes. The walls of the houses were constructed of rough stone of a great variety of sizes, from small pebbles to large boulders. The stones were set in mud, and were not dressed except in the roughest way. The joints between the stones were wide and irregular and into them serpents and scorpions might crawl. The walls varied in thickness, according to the stone used. The roof was supported by stout wooden

1. Edersheim, Alfred, In the Days of Christ, p. 85

beams laid from wall to wall. Across these were laid smaller rafters, then brushwood, reeds, and the like, above which was a layer of earth several inches thick, while on top of all came a thick plaster of clay and lime.² It was such a roofing that the friends of the paralytic man³ broke up in order to lower him into the room where Jesus was. The wood for the roof-beams was furnished mostly by the common sycamore, cypress and cedar; the cedar being reserved for the houses of the wealthy.

The floors of the houses were made of earth, smoothed and beaten hard. Sometimes lime was mixed with the clay for the floor, and in the wealthier homes slabs of stone were used. Floors of cobblestones or stone chippings mixed with lime have been found.⁴

Inside of this none too large house, the entire family would live and often also the animals owned by each family, sheep, goats, dogs, and cattle. The animals and human beings did not all have to be on the same floor at night, however, for in most cases an extra floor was put in the house, over most of the room, from four to six feet higher than the ground. From the door, stone steps ascended to this floor. This second floor served the family in a great many ways, being used for sleeping, storing of provisions, and a resting place. At night when the animals were brought into the house, either for shelter or protection against robbers, they would remain on the ground floor and the members of the family would go to the second floor to sleep. In the winter the warmth engendered by the animals helped to keep the family warm at night.

2. Hastings, James, Dictionary of the Bible, 1 Vol. ed. Houses, pp. 368-371
3. Mk. 2
4. Barton, G. A., Archaeology and the Bible, p. 142.

Another very important and interesting part of the Jewish home was the roof. Outside the house steps led to the flat roof which was a very popular part of the house. The terraces or parapets around the roofs were low and made of dried bricks or stone just like the wall. In the summer, the people usually slept on the roofs of the houses. The roof served many purposes such as the drying of grain, the preparing of flax, the drying of clothes, the storing of provisions and fuel for winter use.

It was not difficult to construct an additional room on any house that might need it. As the family grew larger and were perhaps more able to expand, an additional room was built and often the house was built in a square with an open space in the center which formed a courtyard. In Matthew 7:24-27, is found what Jesus thought about the construction of houses. So many of them, as before mentioned, were built of very unsatisfactory material and did not weather the storms. Jesus took this opportunity to tell the people this great parable in words they could understand, and likened the listener to the sensible man who built his house on rock instead of sand.

An additional room was often built on the roof and was called the upper room.⁶ However, the majority of the poorer homes were probably of only one storey.

The doorways were usually simply an opening made by the vertical sides left in the masonry. In nearly every excavation it is found that while the doors have usually disappeared there is abundance evidence that, like many houses still to be seen in Palestine, they were made fast to a post, both ends of which were set in a hollow or perforated stone.⁷ When the door swung the whole post turned in this stone.

5. Mt. 7:24-27

6. Mk. 14:15 Ac. 1:13

7. Barton, George A. Archaeology and the Bible, p. 142 and ft. note p. 143

Among the Jews a special sanctity was attached to the door of the house. The "Mesusah", a kind of phylactery for the house, was affixed to the door-post. It consisted of a parchment square on which was written Deut. 6:4-9 and 11:13-21. From early times, the presence of the "Mesusah" was connected with the Divine protection.

In the poorer houses, the door played a very important role as it was often the only means of ventilation and also served as the only means of lighting in many cases. It is difficult to imagine this condition of lighting or ventilation in this day of windows and fresh air but such conditions did exist - the animals and people all in one room of a house with no ventilation but a closed doorway and perhaps a crack or two here and there in the wall or the roof.

The lighting and heating of the houses was most certainly very inadequate. In the poorer houses the only lighting in the daytime came in through the door, which of necessity was probably closed a great deal of the time even in the daytime. At night, light was supplied by a small oil lamp which was kept continually burning. Such windows that did exist were placed high up in the walls, at least six feet from the ground. None of these, of course, were filled with glass, but were closed with wood or lattice-work which could be opened when necessary. Most of the houses that have been excavated show a depression in the floor which in all probability was the family hearth. These depressions have been found both in the center of the room and in the corner. Wood was the chief fuel, supplemented by
8
withered vegetation of all sorts and probably, as at the present day,

by dried cow and camel dung.

The furniture of the house was very simple indeed and it is difficult to imagine these people living with so very little to make life easy and pleasant. However, in Jesus' day nothing was known about our many modern conveniences which seem to be so essential to a happy life. The simple folk of Jesus' day were happy and worked hard to keep their families in food and what they thought to be necessary clothing.

The interior of a simple Jewish home will now be discussed, and an attempt will be made to discover what utensils were used for cooking and the storing of food, what accommodations the people had for sleeping, and other interesting things about what might be found inside the four walls of the house.

If the house consisted of only one room, all the activities connected with living in the house were centralized in this one room. Eating, sleeping, resting, and working. In the warm weather, the roof and the out-of-doors were a great salvation to the poor people who lived out-of-doors a great deal of the time.

The floor of the one room would probably be covered with some kind of straw mats, not entirely, but over some of the floor space.
 9
 In the day time, the beds, or pallets, were usually hidden in a recess in the wall with a curtain drawn in front of them. At night they were brought out and placed on the floor or on the raised platform. These pallets were made of skins or cloth and were stuffed with cotton or

or wool. This mat with a quilt completed the sleeping equipment. The family slept near together and disliked to be alone. Whenever possible a light was kept burning all night. Contrary to the idea of the importance of fresh air today, these people while asleep kept their heads covered with the quilt or skin used for a covering. This, together with the conditions of ventilation in these simple houses, and the animal visitors they had for the night, makes it quite remarkable that the people kept as well and happy as they apparently did. There was a great deal of sickness and suffering, however, and probably a great deal of it was due to the unsanitary living conditions.

In a two-room house, or even a house which had two compartments separated by a curtain, one room would be the kitchen and women's apartment and the other would be used for entertainment purposes, where the men would visit together and eat with their guests, while the women might peak through the curtain or wall at them.

Everything in the house was very simple, from the baskets and jars to the chest in which the women kept their clothing and treasures. Food-bins made of clay would probably stand along one side of the room and large jars for holding water, olive-oil, and olives would stand in the corners of the room. Cooking utensils of various kinds would be a part of each household. Skins were used for carrying and holding water and wine. Wooden bowls were used for kneading. The hand-mill was a very important factor in each household. This mill was made of two grinding stones, an upper and a lower one. The grain was poured through a round hole in the center of the upper stone. A handle or

lever on the upper stone made it possible to turn it against the other stone. Two people operated the mill. A supply of baskets of various sizes and shapes would probably be found in almost any household. These were used for different purposes, for bread, fruit and sometimes meat.

The pan, the kettle, the pot and the caldron are mentioned in the

10

Old Testament. The baking-pan and the frying-pan were the only

11

utensils known to be of iron. Pottery figured largely and many good examples have been preserved. The big family dish, a wide deep bowl, from which all members of the family ate with their fingers, was an important and interesting utensil. The material for these different dishes and utensils ranged in quality from the simplest kind of coarse earthenware in the homes of the poor to bronze, silver, and gold in the extremely wealthy homes and palaces.

A brazier or fire-pan might have been used in some of the houses and perhaps a few three-legged stools. In some of the homes a loom might be among the other items of furniture.

Many activities were carried on in the courtyard. The people who could afford a cistern had one for their own use. A great deal of the cooking was done out-of-doors and community ovens were common, where women would go to bake bread. These ovens were made of baked earth, closed by a clay cover. The earth served the oven for the bottom and it was covered with a flat disk on which the thin loaves of bread were placed. More about ovens and baking will be included in a later section.

10. 1 Sam. 2:14

11. Lev. 2:7,9. Ezk. 4:3

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10. 1 Sam. 2:14

11. Lev. 2:7,9. Ezk. 4:3

The pictures at the end of this section give a general impression of a Jewish home. In Fig. 10 is seen the simple Bedouin camp. In Fig. 11 note the construction of the building, the variety of stones and how they are put together. Note the flat roof and the narrow street. In Fig. 12 note the stairway leading to the roof and the little arbor in front made of branches. In Fig. 13 note the interior of a house, the walls, the blankets piled high on the left side, the man and women sitting on the floor, the basket of grain in front of one of the women.



Fig. 10. A Bedouin camp. The camp was made wherever the flock was taken. This type of home was very simple.



Fig. 11. A village street. Beit 'Ur et-Tahta. Note the narrow street, the flat roofs and the construction of the dwellings.



Fig. 12. A typical house. Kaştaş Şaffûriyeh
Note the steps leading to the flat
roof.



Fig. 13. An interior of a house. Note how the man and the
women are seated on the floor. Also the blankets
piled in their particular place in the room. Note
the basket of grain in front of one of the women.

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LIFE IN THE HOME

There is a great difference between the simple home in Palestine in the time of Jesus and the modern home in this country today. The Jewish home was the center of life and everything done by members of the family inside the home or outside, had some place in the home life of each family group. Today there are so many interests outside the home for all members of the family that the home life of the group is often sadly neglected. The family is not as much of a unit as it was eighteen hundred years ago. The Jewish family not only lived together but worked together, prayed together, ate together, and in many cases probably slept together, in one room. Today each member of the family has his or her particular interests and work, inside or outside of the home, and often knows very little of what the other members of the family are doing. Yet, family life today has certain things in common with Jewish home life and could profitably have more.

Food, the preparation and eating of it, dress, the training of children, the place of women in the home, religion in the home and the observance of the Sabbath and daily family worship, are among the important factors that should be studied in order to have a picture of Jewish home life. The first to be discussed is food - what the family might have eaten, how it was prepared, and how and when partaken of.

An important article of food in the Jewish home was bread. A great deal of time was taken by the women in preparing it. The task of making bread was very tedious and it is difficult to realize the many hours of labour required in preparing the finished product - making the flour, mixing the dough, and baking the bread.

The facilities for grinding grain, mixing dough and baking bread today are much different from the crude ways the women used in the time of Jesus. The loaf of bread secured from any store today represents such terms as "machinery", "large scale production" and "producer" and "consumer", which were unknown eighteen hundred years ago. The family, in a great many cases, grew the grain, harvested it, ground it into flour and then made it into bread.

Wheat was easily grown in the valleys and plains of Palestine and was of tremendous importance to the life of the people, for without it bread could not be made. References to wheat in the New Testament are
1
numerous.

The following illustration (Fig. 14) shows a harvest scene in Palestine. The animals are being driven around and around on the threshing floor to separate the wheat from the straw.



Fig. 14. A harvest scene. Threshing at el-Jib.
Note the threshing floor and the animals
being driven over the grain.

1. Mt. 3:12, 13:25, 29,30. Lk. 3:17, 16:7, 22:31 etc.

In the preaching of John the Baptist, the following reference is found:

"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire."²

When Jesus told the parable of the mustard seed, he mentioned wheat: "but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away." In other passages Jesus draws examples from the processes of sowing, threshing, and sifting of the wheat.

After the wheat had been threshed, it was carefully sifted in order to free it from poisonous seeds, small stones and other undesirable elements. It was then washed and dried, and sometimes the drying was done on the housetop. The wheat that was to be used for family use was stored in the house in jars. That portion to be used for the next season's harvest was usually placed in underground cisterns or dry wells which were covered carefully so that no unwelcome visitors would find the storeroom. (See Fig. 15)

Flour was made by rubbing, pounding, or grinding the wheat or barley. In New Testament times this was done by the handmill, already described in a previous section. In Matthew 24:31 a reference to two women grinding the mill is found. These two women sat one on either side of the mill, each turning the upper stone through half a revolution. (See Fig. 16) From the reference in Matthew 18:6, "but whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is



Fig. 15. A cistern top carved out of limestone. Note the places which have been worn in the limestone by the drawing up of the water.



Fig. 16. Women operating the hand mill. Note the basket of grain. Also the hand of the woman grasping the handle of the upper mill stone.

profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea", and from other than the New Testament, it is learned that larger mills were used. The larger mills were operated by an animal instead of by hand.

After the grain was ground into flour it was mixed with water and kneaded. The bread could be baked at once, and if such were the case it would be unleavened bread. This unleavened bread was called Mazzoth and it alone could be used during the Passover and the Mazzoth Festival. Ordinarily, the bread of one day was made from the leaven set aside the day before and when mixed was set aside for a number of hours until ready for baking.

There were three simple ways of baking bread in the Jewish home. As in John 21:9, pieces of dough were laid on hot ashes or stones. This was the most simple way. A few flat stones are gathered together and a fire lighted upon them. When the hot ashes have sufficiently heated the stones, the ashes are removed and the dough placed on the hot stones. The hot coals are then placed over the bread. After a time the coals are removed and the bread turned over and the coals again put on the bread.

A convex iron plate placed over a fire pit or an open-air fire between two stones makes the second type of baking equipment.

(See Fig.17.)

Some type of oven was the third way of baking bread, and this was very likely the most common means of baking bread in the villages. The bowl-oven consisted of a large clay bowl inverted, with a movable lid. The cakes were baked on the heated stones covered by the oven.



Fig. 17. Baking bread for breakfast. Note the flat cakes on the convex surface of the iron plate. A fire pit is under the iron plate.

Heat was secured by heaping cattle dung and other fuel on the outside of the clay bowl. Another type of oven was the jar-oven. This jar-oven was partly filled with fuel, stubble, dry twigs, etc. When the jar was sufficiently heated, the cakes were placed on the inside of the jar. From this type of oven developed the pit-oven which was built partly in the ground. In this oven baking could be done on a larger scale and this was probably the kind used by professional bakers. Many different kinds of cakes were baked by the women, trimmed with seeds of various kinds and made in different shapes.

Such food-stuffs as lentils and beans of various kinds, cucumbers, and other edible herbs were very important in making up the diet of the Jewish family. The olive tree was a great asset to the family, for besides using the olives for oil, which was a great aid in preparing food, they were eaten fresh and preserved in

brine for future use. These preserved, or pickled, olives were used as a relish among the poor and the rich. The fig tree was of great economic importance and the fruit was eaten fresh and a greater part of the year's crop was dried and eaten out of season. The 'fruit of the vine', or the grape, is mentioned many times in the New Testament and served an important part in the diet of the family. The grapes were eaten right from the vine and also after they were dried into raisins. A great part of the fruit of the vineyard was used for wine. Dates were also eaten when fresh and after they were dried. The pomegranate should be mentioned, as well as almonds and nuts of various kinds.

Although the diet of the Jewish family was principally vegetarian, meat of various kinds helped to "dress up" the meal on occasion, especially in honor of a guest, or on a feast day, or a family festival. Among the different kinds of meat eaten, would be found the flesh of the goat, or the kid; the flesh of sheep; and cattle. The calf was the most desirable as we learn from the New Testament,³ and was often especially fattened for the table. The gazelle and the⁴ hart were hunted for food. Eggs were an important article of food and were eaten boiled in the shell or broken and fried.

Fishing was quite an industry among the people in Palestine and the fish was an important part of the food of the time; not only fresh fish was used extensively but salted and cured fish was used throughout the country.

3. Lk. 15:23

4. Lk. 11:12

Fig. 18. Dressing a kid for eating.



Fig. 19. Making laban, or soured milk. Note the large bag made of skin.

Edible insects supplied food also; the locust especially was⁵ used for food. They were prepared in various ways but perhaps the most common way of cooking them was to fry the body in butter after removing the head, legs, and wings.

Honey was an important item in the diet of the Jewish family.⁶ It was used in various ways, alone, and with other things, as well as being used in the making of sweet cakes. Honey was kept in earthen jars for use in the home.

Milk was supplied from cows, sheep, and goats; probably also from camels. The milk was rarely used fresh but was generally made into sour milk something like our buttermilk. This sour milk, or laban, was made by pouring the fresh milk into a skin, to the sides of which clots of sour milk were sticking. The skin was shaken and the sweet milk soon took on a sour taste. (See Fig. 19.) This drink was thought a very fine one. Butter cannot be kept sweet in Palestine, so after it was churned, it was boiled, producing clarified butter. This was used for cooking purposes throughout the year and was stored in jars. Different kinds of cheese were eaten in the Jewish home.

Salt was abundant and played an important part in the diet, as well as in some of the religious practices. Pepper, as well as other seasonings, was also used.

The women of the household prepared the food. Baking, roasting, boiling, and frying all seemed to have been used by the women in the preparation of food. Perhaps the most common method of preparing

5. Mt. 3:4 Mk. 1:6
6. Mt. 3:4 Mk. 1:6

food for the family was the "stew" made by cutting meat into pieces, putting it into a pot containing water and letting it stew. Vegetables, and rice or wheat were added to the meat and stewed with it. The vegetable stew which is made today is prepared in a similar manner.

In the Jewish home there were only two meals, one about the middle of the day and the largest and most important meal about sunset time when the men returned home from their work. Dinner is mentioned in the New Testament. ⁷ The midday meal was probably very simple and the men in the fields often would have what they would carry with them from home, and it would satisfy their hunger until the evening meal. The dinner in the evening was ordinarily a time when the family were all together, perhaps for the first time during the day.

Cushions or divans were drawn up around the low table on which was placed the tray or bowl containing the meal. The Jews sat cross-legged on the cushions or on the ground or floor. The women of the household brought in the food and did the necessary waiting upon ⁸ the men.

Much importance was attached to the ceremony of washing the ⁹ hands before partaking of food. The water for this ceremony was ¹⁰ "purified" by keeping it in closed jars. After this ceremony, the food was brought in and grace said, according to the custom of the ¹¹ time.

7. Mt. 22:4 Lk. 11:38
8. Lk. 10:40 Mk. 1:31
9. Mk. 7:3

10. Jn. 2:6
11. Mt. 15:36, 26:26
Acts 27:35

There were no utensils to help in eating the food and the
 12
 fingers were used to good advantage. The fingers of the right hand
 were used in taking the food out of the common dish and carried it
 to the mouth with ease. Bread was eaten with everything and in the case
 of the more liquid parts of the meal, the bread was used for a carrier
 or sop. A reference in John 13:26 mentions this, "Jesus therefore
 answereth, He it is, for whom I shall dip the sop, and give it him."
 At the close of the meal the hands were again washed.

In order to construct a mental picture of life in the home,
 whether the family be eating, sleeping, or working, it cannot be
 complete without learning about how the men, women, and children were
 dressed. Their dress was quite different from that to which we are
 accustomed in this country, but according to travelers who have been
 to Palestine recently, and from pictures taken there, it seems that in
 some parts of Palestine, among certain types of people, the mode and
 manner of dress is quite similar to that of Jesus' time.

The material of which clothing was made was wool, flax, the
 skins of animals, goat's hair and camel's hair, and perhaps a rare
 13
 bit of silk. Silk is mentioned in Revelation for the first time.

One of the articles of dress which seems the strangest to us
 today is the headdress worn in Jesus' time. Many different types of
 covering were used, from simple to elaborate. (See Figs. 20, 21)

14
 From the New Testament, it is evident that the Jewish people

12. Mt. 26:23

13. Rev. 18:12

14. Lk. 6:29, Mt. 24:18, Mk. 13:16

wore both cloaks and coats. The cloak was the undergarment, or tunic, made in a very simple manner much like small girls of today make doll dresses - by sewing two pieces of material up the sides, leaving openings for the arms and the head. A shirt was often worn under the tunic. This garment almost completely covered the body, reaching almost to the ankles.

The girdle was a very essential article of wearing apparel. This also varied from the most simple of material to very elaborate girdles worn by the priests and kings. The girdle was a long strip of cloth, folded several times and tied around the waist. When preparing for work or a journey, the girdle would be put on and the tunic pulled up under it, making a blouse effect. Money or treasures¹⁵ were carried in the folds of the tunic. During the day, when the men and women were at work the cloak was worn but they possessed a coat also which they wore to protect them from the weather and as a covering to keep them warm at night. This coat was wrapped around the body and could be easily put on or taken off. In the average Jewish home the dress of the women and the men probably was quite similar. (See Figs. 20,21)

Inside the house and in the temple, the family were barefooted.¹⁶ Upon going outside, some type of sandal was usually worn. The simple sandal was made of a leather sole and was kept on by leather thongs binding the sandal to the foot.

15. Mt. 10:9

16. Mk. 1:7



Fig. 20. A typical village peasant woman of Palestine.

Note the headdress, the sandals, the absence of stockings, and the simple dress.

We cannot assume that the dress of the women eighteen hundred years ago looked like this, but a general impression of how they might have looked is gained from this picture.

Fig. 21. A typical village woman who is living the care-free life of the nomad for a part of the year. Many villagers find it necessary to take their flocks out from the village into the pasture lands, and the entire family goes with the herd.

Note the headdress, the bare feet, the simple costume.



The education and care of children was one of the most important functions of the parents in the Jewish home in Palestine. Today so much responsibility for the education of the child is taken out of the home and placed elsewhere that it is difficult for us to realize that practically all the opportunity that was given the children in the form of education was through the parents in the home. There was a very close relationship between the parents and children. There was great importance attached to having children, and parents who were not able to enjoy such a privilege were to be pitied. Barrenness was looked upon with reproach. The parents who were blessed by having a son were considered rich, as so much stress was laid upon having the name of the family perpetuated. Girls were accepted and loved but it was a much more joyful occasion when a baby boy was born.

The parents had complete control over their children and it was an established tradition of their race that children should honor and obey their parents. In the story of the prodigal son,¹⁷ the son says to his Father, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." Both in the Old and New Testaments can be sensed the feeling of tenderness for children, the love of the parents for their offspring, and an appreciation for the simplicity and purity of a little child. Jesus had a fine appreciation of childhood as is seen by his words, "suffer the little children to come unto me; and forbid them not; for to such belongeth the Kingdom of God."¹⁸ And again,¹⁹ "See that ye despise not one of these little ones." And also, "But whoso shall cause one of these little ones to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he

- 17. Lk. 15:19
- 18. Mk. 10:14b
- 19. Mt. 18:10

20

should be sunk in the depth of the sea.

21

The Mishnah, a law book of the Jews, states the different periods of life, from childhood to old age: "At five years of age, reading of the Bible, at ten years, learning the Mishnah; at thirteen years bound to the commandments; at fifteen years, the study of the Talmud; at eighteen years, marriage; at twenty, the pursuit of trade or business (active life); at thirty years, full vigour; at forty, maturity of reason; at fifty, for counsel; at sixty, commencement of agedness; at seventy, grey age; at eighty, advanced old age; at ninety, bowed down; at a hundred, as if he were dead and gone, and taken from the world." This is interesting in that it states that as early as five years a child was supposed to be reading the Bible.

From birth a child in a Jewish home was in an atmosphere of reverence for things sacred. As Edersheim describes it, the first thing that might influence the child was the Mesusah, which was a "kind of phylactery for the house, serving a purpose kindred to that of the phylactery for the person, both being derived from a misunderstanding and misapplication of the Divine direction, taking in the letter what was meant for the spirit....Supposing the Mesusah to have been somewhat as at present, it would have consisted of a small, longitudinally-folded parchment square, on which, on twenty-two lines, these two passages were written: Deut. 6: 4-9 and 11:13-21. Enclosed in a shining metal case and affixed to the door-post, the child, when carried in arms, would naturally put out its hand to it; the more so,

20. Mt. 18:6

21. Aboth, v. 21

that it would see the father and all others, on going out or in, reverently touch the case, and afterwards kiss the finger, speaking at the same time a benediction. (See Fig. 22.) For, from early times, the presence of the Mesusah was connected with the Divine protection, this verse being specially applied to it: "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."²² This together with family worship and religious rites every week and on festive occasions, had in all probability a great effect on a child. Religious rites and festivals will be discussed more fully in a later section. The excellent proverb, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it,"²³ seems to have been taken literally in the Jewish home.

Although the child received his first training from his mother, as she had the care of the children in the home, the father was responsible for the early education of the child. George F. Moore tells that the father was expected to support his children during their early years, and had a right to their services or earnings during their minority, or the age of twelve years and six months. "His obligations to a son are defined: he must circumcise him, redeem him, teach him the Torah, teach him a trade, and get him a wife -- some say also, teach him to swim."²⁴

Teaching in the home was probably begun when the child had reached the age of three. Memory work was stressed, as great importance was attached to the ability to know long passages of scripture even at

22. Ps. 121:8

23. Prov. 22:6

24. Judaism, vol. , p. 127



Fig. 22. A doorway of a house. Note the figure on the top of the doorway. Also the construction of the house, and the flat roof.

a very early age. The children were taught to read aloud. When the child was five years of age, the study of the Hebrew Bible was begun * and at six years of age the child was sent to school at the synagogue. Even in the home the boys and girls were not given the same training. The girls were thought unable to enjoy the same pursuits as the boys, as their work was connected with the home and the raising of children. However, the girls were given some training in the scriptures and attended the religious festivals and the services in the synagogue.

Today with all of the pencils, pens, paper, ink, typewriters and other facilities for writing, it is difficult to realize how the Jewish family did their writing and studying. From different references in the New Testament it is evident that some kind of ink was used.²⁵ Quoting from 3 John, "I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write them to thee with ink and pen.", and also 2 John, "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink; but I hope to come unto you...", it is evident that paper, ink and pens were used. The pen was probably a reed quill. The paper mentioned was papyrus, as paper was not introduced until the 26 7th century A.D. from the East. Parchment is mentioned in 2 Timothy, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments." The penknife was probably a very useful instrument both in keeping the pens sharp and for other purposes. The above references come from the Hellenistic world and not Palestine, but the same materials and utensils would be known in Palestine but probably would not be as common.

The children in the Jewish home liked to play just as the children of today do, and they had toys which they thought were just as fine as

* It is doubtful if synagogue schools were very common in Jesus' time.
 25. 2 Cor. 3:3, 3 John 13, 2 John 12.
 26. 2 Tim. 4:13

the toy electric trains and automobiles of today. It is easy to imagine the children playing on the roofs of the houses and in the courtyards, going to the well with mother, or to the fields with father, and playing on the hills near their home. In the excavations being carried on in Palestine, many things have been brought to light to tell us that there were objects made to amuse the children. Clay rattles have been found both in Babylonia and Palestine.²⁷ Also many grotesque animal figures have been found which were very likely made for children. One or two had a hole drilled through a leg, apparently for the insertion of a string by which a child could drag it.

The place of the woman in the home was an important and influential one. Alfred Edersheim, who writes from the Jewish point of view has this to say about the position of women in Israel during the time of which we are writing:

"In order accurately to understand the position of woman in Israel, it is only necessary carefully to peruse the New Testament. The picture of social life there presented gives a full view of the place which she held in private and in public life. Here we do not find the separation, so common among Orientals at all times, but woman mingles freely with others both at home and abroad. So far from suffering under social inferiority, she takes influential and often leading part in all movements, especially those of a religious character. Above all, we are wholly spared those sickening details of private and public immorality with which contemporary classical literature abounds.

27. Barton, George A. Archaeology and the Bible, p. 171

Among Israel woman was pure, the home happy, and the family hallowed by a religion which consisted not only in public services, but entered into daily life, and embraced in its observances every member of the household.²⁸"

In homes where there were no servants, the woman led a very busy life and though there were servants she probably managed the household and supervised the cooking. It is not difficult to imagine how busy a woman could have been with her family to care for, the house to keep in order, the baking and cooking to do, the washing for the family, and in whatever time she could find the making of clothes for the family. The part played by the woman in the preparation of food has already been discussed. The fuel for the ovens, sticks and grass, was carried by the women on their heads in great bundles. All the water used for domestic use was carried by the women in big jars on their heads. This must have been very hard work for them. (See Fig. 23.) Clothing was washed at the well or spring. It was laid on a flat rock and beaten with a stick to remove the dirt. (See Fig. 24) The making of clothes was indeed a task. The textile materials were wool and flax, and to some extent goats' and camels' hair. These materials had to be prepared for the loom by the women. The wool was scoured and carded, the stalks of flax were rippled and exposed to the sun till dry, then steeped, dried, and beaten until the fibres were ready for combing. The spinning was done by means of a distaff and spindle. The work on the loom was done by both the women and the men. (See Figs. 25,26)

On the whole, the women in Palestine led a very busy life, and were in all probability contented and happy in the home with the family and friends.

28. Edersheim, A. In the Days of Christ, p. 139



Fig. 23. Women at a spring in Samaria. The water was carried from the spring to the home on the heads of the women. Note the heavy jars.

Fig. 24. A woman washing clothes in a stream. The clothing was spread upon a flat rock and was beaten with a stick to remove the dirt.

Wādī el-Āmūd -- Galilee





Fig. 25. Bedouin weaving. This work was done by both the women and the men but the women did the work of preparing the materials for the loom.



Fig. 26. Bedouin weaving.

It is most certainly true that the position of women among the Jews was much higher than it was among many peoples in the Roman Empire and Syria. They were permitted to go about freely and were treated with respect. However, they were not thought of as being on an equal level with the men. The attitude of the parents at the birth of a child shows that there was a difference. The girls were not given the same educational opportunities as the boys. In religion, the position of women was inferior to that of men. George F. Moore writes, "They could not go beyond the court of the women in the Temple, they could not wear phylacteries, and were not obliged to recite the Shema or wear fringes on their mantles. In the synagogue they were seated apart from the men in a gallery behind a trellis. Although not counted members of the congregation, women kindled the Sabbath light and were expected to observe holy days. They could not testify in court of law except to prove the death of a husband. They were, however, subject to positive commandments of the Torah unless they were defined specifically in such a way as to be applicable only to men."²⁹

The place of women was thought to be strictly domestic and the Mishna states that her work is grinding corn, baking, washing, cooking, nursing, making the beds, and working in wool. If the home could afford servants, the duties of the housewife were diminished -- "If she brought her husband one bondswoman, the wife need not grind, bake, or wash; if two, she need not cook or suckle his child; if three, she need not make his bed or work in wool; if four, she might sit in her chair of state."³⁰

29. Judaism, Vol. I, pp. 119-140

30. Ket., 5.

Not many of the women in the average home of Palestine were in this position. Jesus contributed much toward raising the position of women by his teaching and his actions.

Religion permeated the Jewish home. The rite of circumcision separated the Jew from the nations around, and dedicated him to God. Private prayer, morning and evening, hallowed daily life, and family religion pervaded the home. Before every meal they washed and prayed; after it they "gave thanks". Besides there were what may be designated as specially family feasts. They observed the Sabbath as a season of sacred rest and joy. Rabbinism made this a burden by having so many laws, thus changing its sacred character somewhat.³¹

31. Edersheim, Alfred, In the Days of Christ, p. 97

THE HOME AND THE COMMUNITY

No matter in what part of the world, or whether it be today or two thousand years ago, it is impossible to separate the family from the people who make the community of which they form a part. When writing about life in the home, it was difficult at every step not to bring in some instance of the influence of the group or the community on the home life of the family. The Jewish home was closely connected with the community. The relationship of the home to the social customs of the time, the educational system, trade and commerce, and the religious activities of the community will be discussed in this section of the study of Jewish home life. The illustration below, (Fig. 27.) is a typical village in Palestine and shows a well outside the village where the people gather at all times of the day for water. The women bring their jars to be filled, the men bring their live-stock for water. It was a frequented place in every community.



Fig. 27. A well where people and animals obtained water. A village is seen not far away.

When a child was six years of age he was sent outside the home for further education, if there was a school in the village. This seems an excellent place to begin the study of the community.

The school where the child was first sent was an elementary school connected with the synagogue. It is doubtful if these schools were very common in Palestine in Jesus' day, but there were such schools. Only the boys were sent to the school, as the girls received all their instruction in the home. The pupils sat on the floor at the feet of the teacher. The only textbooks they had were rolls of the sacred Scriptures. The pupil was taught to read and to write; he very likely already knew many passages of scripture and could repeat them from memory. The process of learning to write is always slow and the Jewish boys practiced their letters and words on bits of pottery. After a time they would use a stylus and a wax tablet with which to write, and not until they became quite sure of themselves, was papyrus used.

The teachers were connected with the synagogue and were supposed to be well versed in the law. Their purpose was to give moral training to the boys as well as teaching them the law. The teacher was supposed to punish the child when necessary but was limited in his power. "If after three, or at most five, years of tuition the child had not made decided progress, there was little hope of his attaining to eminence."¹

"The expenses of the school were met by voluntary and charitable contributions and in case of deficiency the most distinguished rabbis did not hesitate to go about and collect aid from the wealthy. The

1. Edersheim, Alfred, In the Days of Christ, p. 136

number of hours during which the junior classes were kept in school was limited. As the close air of the school-room might prove injurious during the heat of the day, lessons were intermitted between ten A.M. and three P.M. For similar reasons, only four hours were allowed for instruction between the seventeenth of Thamuz and the ninth of Ab (about July and August) and teachers were forbidden to chastise their pupils during these months...No teacher was employed who was not a married man...A very beautiful trait was the care bestowed on the children of the poor and on orphans...Indeed, orphans were the special charge of the whole congregation.²"

Those who remained in school and were interested in learning to become a teacher or to study law as a profession, passed on into the higher schools and were taught by famous doctors of the law. Thus in the Jewish home and community the education of the child was closely connected with his religious instruction both in the home and in the synagogue. This is something which is sadly lacking in our present day education, secular education is divorced in name at least from any form of religious instruction.

The leaders of the Jews, the parents of the children, were firmly convinced of the importance of giving their children proper instruction, Josephus, a contemporary writer of the time, writes regarding the instruction of children:

"We take most pains of all with the instruction of children, and esteem the observation of the laws and the piety corresponding with them the most important affair of our whole life."³

2. Edersheim, Alfred, In the Days of Christ, p. 137-8

3. Antiquities of the Jews, Apion. 1. 12

Philo, who also wrote during this time, gives the following:

"Since the Jews esteem their laws as divine revelations, and are instructed in the knowledge of them from their earliest youth, they bear the image of the law in their souls." And, "They are taught, so to speak, from their swaddling-clothes by their parents, teachers, and those who bring them up, even before instruction in the sacred laws and the unwritten customs, to believe in God the one Father and Creator of the world."⁴

As the religious life of the home and community was so closely related to the educational life, the religious activities, places of worship, and festivals will now be discussed.

The synagogue was the place of worship of the Jews. The synagogue was an institution of great influence in the community and in some towns and villages the synagogue was the civic government. In some places this was not possible, as the political situation differed in the different towns in Palestine, yet in some places the community was a religious community and there was no division, as it would have been unnatural to have needed one.

It is remarkable that it is possible today to reconstruct a picture of what the synagogue was, the size, construction, and other details concerning it, through the excavations in Palestine. Remains have been found from the first centuries of our era of what were once undoubtedly synagogues. In general the buildings were similar. The synagogue was rectangular in shape and was divided into three or five aisles by rows of pillars made of the stone of the country. The 'Ark'

4. Legat. ad Cajum, 31, Mang. ii. 577

Note: An excellent reference for the synagogue is, Sukenik, E. L., Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece. c. 1934. London.

was the most important object in the synagogue: it was a chest in which the sacred rolls of the Law and the Prophets were kept. A lamp burned day and night in front of the Ark. There was probably a platform in most of the synagogues on which the person reading the scriptures would stand. The seats in the synagogues would be placed so that the worshippers could face the holy city. Trombones and trumpets were instruments in public worship.

The elders would be seated in front of the Ark facing the people. The women sat in the gallery, and not with the men. The attendant referred to in Luke 4:20 was the Hazzan, or sexton, who received a salary for his services. He had charge of the synagogue building and the furniture and was responsible for the care of the rolls of the Scriptures. He gave the signal to stop work on the eve of the Sabbath and also at the close of a holy day. He also served as the schoolmaster in a great many synagogues. Each synagogue was presided over by a Head of the Synagogue, probably chosen from among the elders. He had general charge of all services in the synagogue and invited strangers⁵ to address the people.

According to the Mishna, the chief parts of the service were the recitation of the Shema, prayer, the reading of the Torah, the reading of the prophets, the blessing of the priest. "Philo briefly describes the service of the Hellenistic synagogue, particularly as an institute of instruction in the scriptures. Moses commanded that the Jews should assemble on the seventh day, and being seated should reverently and decorously listen to the Law, in order that no one might be ignorant of

5. Moore, George F., Judaism, Vol. I. p. 289

it; and such is the present custom. One of the priests who is present, or one of the elders, reads to them the divine laws and expounds them in detail, continuing till some time in the late afternoon; then the congregation disperses, having acquired knowledge of the divine laws and making much progress in religion."⁶

Edersheim draws a word picture of a service in the synagogue,

"We can see the leader of the people's devotions (according to Talmudic direction) he first refuses, with mock-modesty, the honour conferred on him by the chief ruler; then, when urged, prepares to go; and when pressed a third time, goes up with slow and measured steps to the lectern, and then before the Ark. We can imagine how one after another, standing and facing the people, unrolls and holds in his hand a copy of the Law or of the Prophets, and reads from the Sacred Word, the Methurgeman interpreting. Finally, we can picture it, how the preacher would sit down and begin his discourse, none interrupting him with questions till he had finished, when a succession of objections, answers, or inquiries might await the interpreter."

The two fundamental observances of Judaism are circumcision and the sabbath. To the Jews, circumcision was a divine institution, given by God to Abraham. A Jewish child was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth unless circumstances did not permit.⁸

The keeping of the seventh day as a 'holy' day by religious abstention from every kind of labor was the second fundamental observance. It was called 'an eternal covenant', an 'eternal sign' between⁹

6. Moore, George F. Judaism, Vol. I. p. 306

7. Note: In Palestinian synagogues, the addresses might be made in Hebrew and translated into Aramaic.

8. Moore, George F., Judaism, Vol. II., p. 16

9. Ezek. 20:12

God and Israel.

"And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily ye shall keep my sabbaths; for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am Jehovah who sanctifieth you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you; every one that profaneth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from his people. Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to Jehovah;...Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever." 11

There were many rules for keeping the sabbath and Jesus did a number of things on that day which were considered unlawful. "And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, who do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?"

It was natural for the Pharisees to condemn the disciples for this, as it was, in their view, a desecration of the sabbath. Yet it was not a breach of the Biblical, but of the Rabbinic Law. Jesus attempted to show them wherein they were wrong by his answer, "And he said unto them, the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." 12 "Unlike the others of the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath Law has in it two elements: the moral and the ceremonial: the eternal, and that which is subject to time and place; the inward and spiritual, and the outward. In their distinction and separation

10. Exodus 31:12-18

11. Exodus 31:12-18

12. Mk. 2:23-28

lies the difficulty of the subject. In its spiritual and eternal element, the Sabbath Law embodied the two thoughts of rest for worship, and worship which pointed to rest. The keeping of the seventh day, and the Jewish mode of its observance, were the temporal and outward form in which these eternal principles were presented."¹³

George F. Moore, in his exhaustive study of Judaism, tells us that there were thirty-nine principal species of infraction of the sabbath catalogued in the Mishnah and each one of these covered minor operations. For example, 'plowing' would include spading the ground, or digging a trench; 'sowing' would cover planting trees, pruning, etc. Besides these classes of prohibitions there were others which rested solely on rabbinical authority. Such a list is found in the Mishnah. "Those that were prohibited 'for the sake of sabbatical observance' were climbing a tree, riding on a beast, swimming, clapping hands, smiting on the thigh, dancing. There follow: holding court,¹⁴ betrothing a wife, performing the ceremony of loosing the shoe, or entering into levirate marriage: in another category are consecrating¹⁵ anything, valuing, dedicating by a ban." The sabbath was hedged about by a multitude of restrictions. The rise of the synagogue gave the sabbath a different character than before. The sabbath had a more festal character before so much stress was laid upon being in the synagogue a great part of the day learning things religious. It was a day of rest and gladness. "Everything that might damp the joyous spirit of the day was shut out. The period of strict mourning

13. Edersheim, Alfred, Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. II,
 14. Deut. 25:8-10 p. 56.
 15. Judaism, Vol. II. p. 29

was interrupted by the sabbath or other sabbatical day." ¹⁶ We can understand how Jesus realized the need of the people for a new idea of the sabbath other than restriction. Jesus did not say that there should be complete freedom on the sabbath, but that there was freedom to do anything that was needful or helpful in service to humanity.

The religious life of the Jews was not confined to the services in the synagogue on the sabbath, or to the daily routine observances in the home, but contained a round of festivals, each having some particular significance for the people.

One of the festivals which caused great rejoicing and necessitated great preparation was the Passover, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This festival commemorates the beginning of the religious year. The people remember the time when they made their safe exodus from Egypt. This festival took place in the month of Abib (April) and lasted seven days. During these seven days no leavened bread was to be eaten. When the sun set on the eve of the festival, everything was in readiness for the celebration. It was a time for a general cleaning up of everything, new clothes for the family, and a thorough cleaning of the house. It was of extreme importance to rid the house of every vestige of leavened bread and utensils used in making it.

The Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, occurred fifty days after the beginning of the Passover in the month of June. It was also called the Feast of Harvest and the Day of First-Fruits. This festival lasted only one day and was a time of rejoicing over the end of the

harvest season, especially the wheat and barley harvest. The Feast of Unleavened Bread contained an offering of a barley sheaf which opened the reaping season; this season closed with the Feast of Weeks.

The Feast of Trumpets marked the beginning of the secular year and lasted for ten days, the tenth day being the Day of Atonement. The ten days of the Feast of Trumpets were days of repentance, in order to be ready for the Day of Atonement. This day was of great importance and significance. The people confessed their sins at this time, no work was to be done and it was a time of fasting. In Acts 27:9 a reference is made to this day as the "Fast". It was perhaps the most solemn occasion of the year.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a time of thanksgiving for the ingathering of the fruits of the summer. It was also referred to as the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Ingathering. This festival lasted for seven days and besides celebrating the ingathering of the fruits and products of other kinds, it was also a time for remembering the years of wandering in the wilderness. It was a time of great rejoicing and was probably the most popular of the Jewish festivals. During the days of the feast, the people built arbours of branches on the roofs of the houses. There were many customs associated with the festival which were carried on in the temple; these added impressiveness to the festival.

The Feast of Purim was held on the fourteenth of March (Adar). This festival commemorated the deliverance of the Jews from Haman in 473 B. C. At this time the Book of Esther is read and tribute paid to Esther and Mordecai. It was a time of rejoicing and enjoyment.

"In accordance with Esther 9:22, it was customary, and indeed obligatory, for families to send choice viands from their feast to one another and make presents to the poor either in food or money."¹⁷

There were a number of other festivals which will not be described here and there was also a great deal of fasting at times other than at the festivals. In Luke 18:12, the reference is made to fasting twice a week.

17. Moore, George F., Judaism, Vol. II. p. 53

Marriage in the Jewish family was a great event in the life of the family and the community. The plans for the marriage were often made by the parents when their sons and daughters were still children. It is very likely that the wishes and consent of the young people were considered in many cases in finding either a husband or a wife. A payment in money was given the father of the bride from the bridegroom; this was called a dowry and from this the father of the bride usually gave her such presents as he was able. The wedding costume was also a gift of the bridegroom's family. It was very important to have the plans for marriage completed as soon as possible in the family as the parents felt it a grave responsibility to have their children married successfully. The betrothal was considered sacred and binding and in most cases was lived up to, resulting in marriage.

It is very difficult to reconstruct the different scenes, celebrations and customs which made up the marriage among the Jews, as so little is recorded concerning it. It is possible to have a few general ideas of what probably did take place at this time of rejoicing and festivity and from these an imaginative picture can be drawn.

There was undoubtedly a wedding procession at night in which lights played a large part. The marriage supper followed, and to
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decline an invitation was an insult. The burden of entertaining was not light and often taxed the parents. There is no record of any religious ceremony as a part of the festivity and the procession, the wedding feast, followed by the entry into the bridal chamber,

completed the wedding.

Many descriptions are written regarding marriages today in Palestine and they are very colorful and interesting. It is not unreasonable to suppose that a great many of the customs of today are the same as they were in Palestine in the time of Jesus. However, there are also likely to be great differences and these modern descriptions should be read with the sense of evaluating them in the light of eighteen hundred years ago, and a general impression gained from them.

19

Jesus described a wedding in a parable, and although he was only using the illustration to make clear his story, it is possible to learn a number of things about a wedding from it: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps (or torches) and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil: for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, peradventure there will not be enough for us and you; go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut."

At the time of marriage the wife became a part of her husband's family and helped his family in the home. It was considered an

affliction if a child was not born within a reasonable time after the wedding. If a child was born and it happened to be a boy, there was great rejoicing but, as before stated, baby girls were well treated and loved by their parents.

Marriage was thought to be the right and natural state among the Jews. Divorce was not thought well of in the New Testament. Jesus
20
held the view that marriage was a divine institution.

Death among the Jewish people was an occasion for deep and prolonged mourning. When a death occurred, it was announced to the surrounding homes by a wail which was taken up by sympathetic friends of the deceased and his family.

H. Clay Trumbull, in Studies in Oriental Social Life, says,

"The life of the East of the present is the life of the East of the past in the hour of mourning as it is in the hour of rejoicing. At the very moment of death, one of these wild shrieks, by whoever is nearest the dead, announces the fact of the death to all who are within hearing. This cry is taken up and repeated by friends of the family near and far. Every sympathizing woman friend who hurries to share the mourning over the dead, announces her approach to the sorrow-stricken home by the conventional shriek, and then adds her voice to the shrieking chorus when she is fairly within the mourning circle."²¹

It was expected at this time for the relatives to make a great disturbance by their weeping and wailing, tearing the hair and clothes, and beating themselves.²² Professional wailers were frequently employed, at a time of mourning, but this should not be construed as a lack of sincerity in the grief of the family and friends. It was the custom to have much wailing and evidently the more the better. (See Fig. 28.)

Because of the climate, the burial followed soon after the death. If the death occurred in the morning, the burial would be the same day and if the death was in the evening or late afternoon the funeral would be the following morning. The weeping and wailing continued from the moment of death until burial, being intensified at the time of burial.

21. Studies in Oriental Social Life, p. 147

22. Mk. 5:38



Fig. 28. A memorial dance for a leading citizen of the town who died a month before.

The burial did not end the mourning, for the spirit of the deceased was supposed to remain with the body for several days after death and for three days the spirit of the dead was deemed as in a sense within hearing of the body, and the wailing calls on the dead²³ by the mourning relatives were repeated as at the hour of death.

Trumbull points out that in view of this idea Martha, the sister of Lazarus of Bethany, protested against the opening of her brother's grave, when he had "been dead four days" and his body was²⁴ beyond the hope of reviving. "It was in order to make sure that the dead had remained dead, that the tomb was opened on the third day, as²⁵ suggested in the visit of the women to the sepulcher of Jesus."

The period of mourning did not stop here but continued throughout seven days and nights and then sometimes was prolonged into weeks, months, and even years. (See Fig. 28.) The place where the dead were buried was called the House of Eternity, the House of Life, the Place of Rest, etc.

23. Trumbull, H. C., Studies in Oriental Social Life, p. 12

24. John 11:39

25. Studies in Oriental Social Life, p. 178

Economic Factors

"For their soil is universally rich and fruitful, and full of the plantation of trees of all sorts, insomuch that it invites the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation, by its fruitfulness; accordingly, it is all cultivated by its inhabitants, and no part of it lies idle." ²⁶ This description of Galilee is given by Josephus, and quoting from his writings again, his idea of Judea and Samaria at this same time in history is given:

"For both countries are made up of hills and valleys, and are moist enough for agriculture, and are very fruitful. They have abundance of trees, and are full of autumnal fruit, both that which grows wild, and that which is the effect of cultivation. They are not naturally watered with many rivers, but derive their chief moisture from rainwater, of which they have no want; and for those rivers which they have, all their waters are exceeding sweet; by reason also of the excellent grass they have, their cattle yield more milk than do those in other places; and what is the greatest sign of excellency and of abundance, they each of them are very full of people." ²⁶

Palestine in the time of Jesus was principally an agricultural country and as Josephus writes the soil was rich and fruitful. In normal years the produce from the soil would be ample for the needs of the people and only in time of drought and famine did the people suffer. They even raised enough produce to send some outside their own country.

Grain, principally wheat and barley, was grown extensively and

26. Josephus, Flavius, Wars of the Jews, Book III, Chap. iii.

vegetables of all description were cultivated and formed a large part of the diet of the people. Palestine was rich in fruits. Wine was made from the grapes and also raisins and honey. Oil was plentiful. Thus agriculture - the cultivation of the soil - was a very important factor in the life of any community. (See Figs. 29,30,31)



Fig. 29. A man plowing. Note the simple plow. The stick in his hand is used to probe the oxen.



Fig. 30. A harvest scene. The threshing floor.



Fig. 31. Plowmen in Galilee. Note the rocky soil.

Flocks of sheep and goats were raised and taken from place to place by the shepherds, wherever the grazing was good. The meat was eaten and the wool and hides used for clothing. (See Fig. 31)



Fig. 32. A shepherd leading his sheep. Plain of Gennesaret.

Fishing was done in the Sea of Galilee. Josephus states that there were "several kinds of fish in the Lake of Gennesareth, different both in taste and sight from those elsewhere."²⁷ The story of the calling of the fishermen to be followers of Jesus testifies to the fact that fishing was a common occupation in the time of Jesus. The fish was eaten fresh from the water and also in a salted form, the latter being sold both in Palestine and abroad.

Quantities of salt could be procured from the Dead Sea and it was used for many purposes, seasoning, preserving of fish, pickling olives and vegetables, and it even played an important role in the sacrificial ritual.

Not only were the Jewish people engaged in agricultural pursuits, fishing, and mining, but many different arts and crafts were practiced. There were workers in wood, workers in stone, workers in metal, workers in clay, and workers in leather. There were also trades connected with the making of clothing, weaving, dyeing, tailoring (mentioned in Mishna for the first time).

It was customary for the father to instruct his son in a trade and the son usually followed in the footsteps of his father. The example of Jesus following the carpenter trade because his father taught it to him is an outstanding example. Dr. Joseph Klausner, in his book Jesus of Nazareth, states:

"We find, almost contemporary with Jesus, mention of no less than forty kinds of craftsmen in the Jewish literature: Tailors, shoemakers,

27. Josephus, Falvius, Wars of the Jews, Book III, 10:7

28. Mk. 9:49 Lv. 2:13

builders, masons, carpenters, millers, bakers, tanners, spice-merchants, apothecaries, cattlemen, butchers, slaughterers, dairymen, cheesemakers, physicians and bloodletters, barbers, hairdressers, laundrymen, jewellers, smiths, weavers, dyers, embroiderers, workers in gold brocade, carpet makers, matting makers, well-diggers, fishermen, bee-keepers, potters and platemakers (who were also pottery dealers), picture makers, coopers, pitch-refiners and glaze-makers, makers of glass and glassware, armourers, copyists, painters and engravers.²⁹ Not all of these crafts would have been practiced at one place and in the smaller villages among the poorer people, a great many of the above would not have been a separate trade. In many of the homes, almost all of the necessities of life were made right in the family - the bread made out of flour from the wheat grown in the fields; wine, olive oil, cheese, and other foods made; clothes made for the family from material spun and woven by members of the family; pottery made by the family and used for many different things. The life in this type of home would have been much different from the homes of today where everything is brought into the home ready made.

Different parts of Palestine were noted for different crafts. When the head of the family engaged in a craft, he probably had a small workshop where he worked with his sons or with apprentices. In the larger towns or cities, such as Jerusalem, people engaged in the same craft would have their shops together. Josephus mentions the place in Jerusalem where there were "the merchants of wool, the braziers, and the market for cloth".³⁰ It is likely also that there was some organization³¹ among the members of the same trade in the time of Jesus.

In spite of the fact that there were all of these handicrafts in which the Jews could be engaged, the greater part of the people were not

29. Klausner, Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, p.

30. Josephus, Flavius, Wars of the Jews, Book V., 8:1

31. Acts 19:24

artisans but peasants, who owned a small portion of land and supported their families from the produce of it. Dr. Klausner states that the reason for this may have been because the native craftsmen could not compete with foreign goods. He says, "These middle-class peasants, whose land provided them with an adequate though limited subsistence, were the bulk and the mainstay of the nation. They populated most of the villages and also the small and medium sized towns." These people lived by the labour they expended on their property. The family together did their own ploughing, sowing, reaping, threshing, and winnowing. (See Fig. 33)



Fig. 33. A Fellah plowing. Note the stony ground.

The family consumed most of what was raised and the rest was sold in the market place, or bartered. Under these conditions, these people were not able to save any money for the future when famine or drought might come. When some tragedy did overtake them, they were reduced to the place where they would hire themselves out to work for the more fortunate land owners. There were a very few wealthy people but there was quite a large number of well-to-do land owners whose

land earned more than was needed and consequently these people were the ones who made possible the produce market and trade.

Thus "apart from the comparatively few large landowners with great estates, and the more numerous well-to-do peasant class, we find a multitude of small-holders and a complete "proletariat" of every kind: hirelings, artisans, landless peasants, tenants, lessees, renters, household servants and personal attendants. These were all men and women who had no means of subsistence beyond their ability to work. So long as they could secure work, all was well with them; but if not, they were reduced to want and beggary - the passive victims of grievances and the dreamers of dreams, or else imbued with violent rage and the spirit of revolt."³²

Slavery existed in Palestine at this time, and though the slaves were not as numerous nor as maltreated as in Rome, yet the condition of slavery was present with all of its terrible associations.

Commerce was an important factor in the life of the community, the home, and the country of Palestine. The geographical position of Palestine with regard to the rest of the world is and was unique and had a great deal to do with the development along commercial lines.

³³
George Adam Smith in The Historical Geography of the Holy Land, says:

"The Semitic home is distinguished by its central position, between Asia and Africa, between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, which is Europe; and the role in history of the Semitic race has also been intermediary. The Semites have proved the middlemen of the world. Not second-rate in war, they have risen to the first rank in commerce and religion. They have been the carriers between East and West, they have

³². Klausner, Joseph, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 182.

³³. pp. 5,6.

stood between the ancient civilisations and those which go to make up the modern world; while by a higher gift, for which their conditions neither in place nor in time fully account, they have been mediary between God and man, and proved the religious leaders of the world, through whom have come its three highest faiths, its only universal religions ... Syria lies between two continents - Asia and Africa; between two primeval homes of men - the valleys of the Euphrates and the Nile; between two centres of empire - Western Asia and Egypt; between all these, representing the Eastern and ancient world, and the Mediterranean, the gateway to the Western and modern world."

It is easy to see why the Jewish people were led into trade and commerce. Internal trade was carried on in the towns and villages where agricultural produce was exchanged. Trains of camels would go up and down the country carrying valuable cargoes. It was probably a common sight in Jesus' home at Nazareth to see these traders with their caravans go by, dusty from their long trip, but very interesting and exciting to watch. (See Figs. 34, 35)



Fig. 34. Camel caravan en route from Egypt to Damascus. Plain of Esdraelon.

The pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the festivals developed internal trade, and it was natural that people from different parts of the country would see things which could not be procured where they lived and would bring things to trade. The country was so diversified that a great many different products were made available through internal trade.



Fig. 35. Camel caravan near site of ancient Shechem going through the ancient pass leading from the seacoast plain into the interior of the Jordan Valley.

Foreign trade was carried on by land and by sea. Dr. Klausner states that "Jewish ships, manned by Jewish crews and laden with Jewish merchandise, sailed the Jordan, the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Nile and the Euphrates, and travelled as far as France, Spain, Cyrene, Carthage and even India."³⁴ Because of this, some of the Jews became wealthy. Trade and commerce also led to a system of banking and money lending which

³⁴. Jesus of Nazareth, p. 188

created more wealthy people. Thus Palestine came to have two classes of people, the poor and the wealthy. The unemployed, the peasants who could never hope to even own their own land, the beggars and other types of outcasts on the one hand and the wealthy farmers and rich merchants on the other.

The political situation of the time aggravated this condition. Every country under the Roman rule felt the pressure of the load they were made to carry and rebelled inwardly, and at times outwardly in riots, revolts, and protests. The people of the time who were concerned enough about conditions to protest were usually made to suffer. The people had no part in political affairs but were expected to pay heavy taxes to the government.

From 67 B.C. to 39 A.D. hardly a year passed without war or disturbances of some kind. Just as today, the pick of the nation, physically, intellectually and culturally were exploited by war, leaving the weaker to carry on.

At the time of Jesus' birth Palestine was governed by Herod the Great; it was under the suzerainty of Rome, though nominally an independent kingdom. The writings of the time give evidence to the conditions of impoverishment in Palestine under the dominion of the Herodians and Romans. For example, in Luke, 12:58, this reference is found:

"For as thou art going with thine adversary before the magistrate, on the way give diligence to be quit of him; lest haply he drag thee unto the judge, and the judge shall deliver thee to the officer, and the officer shall cast thee into prison." The next verse states that once in prison the person stays there until the last bit of money is paid.

In Matt. 18:25, this reference is found:

"But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made."

Although the political situation had a great effect on the people of Palestine in every phase of life, in the home, the school, the synagogue, the community and the country as a whole, it can only be touched upon here. To understand the teachings of Jesus, it is essential to know the political situations which so greatly effected his life and thought. A number of references are given at the end of this section which deal with this particular phase of the background of the life and teachings of Jesus.

The political, economic, and social conditions were such that it is evident that the stage was being set for the coming of some great movement, and it came in the form of a lowly carpenter, a Jew who was a part of the life of Palestine, who knew the tragedies, the wickedness, and all of the unpleasant things which existed in Palestine, but who also knew the wonderful words of life, the beauty of nature, the value of a simple home life, the importance of good will among all men of all classes, and who exemplified in his life a complete trust and faith in his Heavenly Father.

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